



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

NEWS RELEASE

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**Eight 'Standing Up' awards recognize efforts to advocate for
rural schools, communities, and libraries**

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster presented her first Standing Up for Rural Schools, Communities, and Libraries awards March 9 during the annual Small Schools Conference in Wisconsin Rapids.

The awards recognize the efforts of Wisconsin rural communities that have advocated for their schools, libraries, and way of life at a time when many are threatened by difficult financial challenges. "We have strong schools because of the capable teachers and administrators, engaged business and community leaders, and active parents working together to keep schools strong," Burmaster said.

Awards were presented to

- **Butternut School District** and the **Greater Butternut Area Partnership Committee** for its efforts to commit to sustainability in the school and community. The first step in the effort is the Housing Development Project of the Butternut School District, an affordable housing project that will help people to live and work in Butternut. John Besse, owner and general manager of Besse Forest Products, committed \$650,000 to develop this project.
- **Chilton High School** for its work with the community on the annual Veteran's Day observance. Dating back to at least the early 1950s, the traditional celebration builds strong community ties as it recognizes and celebrates service.
- **The Florence Mining News** for Owner and Editor Hank Murphy's advocacy on behalf of rural education through his unbiased reporting of issues surrounding the February 2005 referendum to provide funding for the Florence School District.
- **Intercultural Leadership Initiative**, a partnership between the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council and Lakeland Union High School, started with 10 students in 1998 to ease racial tensions and violence and increase academic achievement for American Indian students. The program opens dialogues among student groups to promote cultural understanding, conflict resolution, and a fair representation of community histories through intercultural experiences. The Intercultural Leadership Initiative now serves more than 600 students.
- The **Marshfield Chamber of Commerce** and **Spencer School District** for a "Reality Store" implemented in 2002 to provide students with first-hand experience with

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household budgets, making a living, and providing for oneself and others. The “store” helps students develop financial literacy, grasp career choices, and understand the education needed to succeed in the future.

- **Oconto Falls School District, the facilities planning committee, and the community-based Oconto Falls Friends of the Arts** for asking the community to include the arts in its building referendum and for three years of dedicated efforts to offer a Fine Arts Series at the Oconto Falls High Performing Arts Center. The Fine Arts Series enriches the quality of life in Oconto Falls and the surrounding community.
- **Pecatonica School District; the Village of Blanchardville; Linda Flanigan, manager of Park Bank; and Blanchardville CommunityPride Inc.** for cooperative efforts to develop and establish a community garden. Pecatonica students, the 4-H, church groups, and other youth organizations worked with and learned from business people and other volunteers as they prepared the garden site; constructed raised beds, fences, and benches; and grew produce to be sold at a homegrown farmer’s market. Additional plans will continue and develop the community garden.
- **The Village of Suring and Suring School District** for its community-wide effort to build on youth involvement from its sesquicentennial celebration to save an historic iron bridge. The bridge—moved to a location where it is a center for community activity—includes a mural, community garden, flagpole, and gazebo and serves as a “bridge to tomorrow.”

“Contributions such as these create the supportive environment and deep sense of community pride that make rural communities a great place to live, work, and raise and educate a family,” Burmaster said. “These ‘Standing Up’ awards speak to the efforts for rural Wisconsin citizens who are standing up for rural schools, communities, and libraries.”

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NOTE: To receive digital photos from the Standing Up for Rural Schools, Communities, and Libraries awards program, contact Ron Anderson, DPI, (608) 266-3374, < ronald.anderson@dpi.state.wi.us >, or view photos from the event at the awards photo gallery at < <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/sprntdnt/photos/sur05/index.html> >.